Welsh Language

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Responsibility of	**Subject Lead for Welsh Language**
Review changes: updated to make reference to the Report of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities and Welsh Government response (paragraph 9), and decision ref *04193 (paragraph 18).	

Key legislation and policy

Legislation	• Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015) • Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 • Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
National policy and guidance	• Planning Policy Wales – in particular paragraphs 3.25-29, but also chapters 4, 5 & 6 ○ TAN 20: Planning and the Welsh Language (2017) • Dear CPO letter – Publication of TAN 20, 13 October 2017 • Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers
Other guidance	• Welsh Ministers' Welsh Language Scheme
Judgments	• Driver v Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC and Comisiynydd y Gymraeg Welsh Language Commissioner [2020] EWHC 2071 (Admin)

The Welsh language today

1. The Welsh language is a key part of the social and cultural fabric of Wales. In 2021, 29.1% of people aged three or over were able to speak Welsh; around 883,300 people. Figures have been gradually increasing each year since 2010. The proportion of Welsh speakers varies from over 76% in Gwynedd to 16% in Blaenau Gwent.

2. The proportion of Welsh speakers in the north and west of the country has gradually declined in recent years. This reduction is influenced by outmigration of young people and inmigration by people who do not use the language. The proportion of people able to speak Welsh varies significantly by age group, with higher proportions of children able to speak Welsh as a result of the growing provision of Welsh-medium education.

Legislation and policy

3. **The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011** confirmed the official status of the Welsh language in Wales and created a new legislative framework for the language.

4. **The Planning (Wales) Act** amended the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA) and Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) to require Welsh language impacts in the sustainability appraisal for Local Development Plans (LDPs) (PCPA s62(6A)), and to confirm that the impact on the use of the Welsh language can be a material consideration when determining a planning application (TCPA s70(2)(aa)).

5. Among the 7 well-being goals set out in section 4 of the **Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (WBFGA)** is a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. The Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives currently include 'Push towards a million Welsh speakers, and enable our tourism, sports and arts industries to thrive'. Among the 46 national well-being indicators that Welsh Government publishes annually are indicators which record the percentage of people that speak Welsh daily, and those that can speak Welsh.

6. **Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers (2017)** is a national strategy that seeks to provide the conditions to facilitate almost a doubling in the number of Welsh speakers, a doubling in those that use Welsh daily and the maintenance of Welsh-speaking communities. The associated Work Programme 2017-21 identifies the means of supporting the socioeconomic infrastructure of Welsh-speaking communities, including the importance of employment and community facilities.

7. **PPW** refers to the duty on those carrying out planning functions to do so in accordance with the principles of sustainable development as defined in the WBFGA. It makes clear that there should be no discrimination against individuals on the basis of linguistic ability nor should housing occupancy be restricted on such a basis. In areas of particular language sensitivity or importance PPW explains that impact assessments may be required for large developments not allocated in a development plan.

8. **TAN 20** (2017) predates the most recent edition of PPW. It identifies the role of the planning system in contributing to the future well-being of the language, for instance by creating conditions for well-paid employment and a range of quality housing options as part of planning for sustainable communities. Its emphasis is on considering the effects on the Welsh language as part of LDP preparation. However, it identifies the potential impact of signs on the character of an area, including its linguistic character and recognises that they are a method of promoting the distinctive culture of Wales.

9. **Empowering communities, strengthening the Welsh Language** (August 2024) is a report of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities (which was established in 2022 by Welsh Government). It includes a chapter on the relationship between town and country planning and language planning. The Commission published a separate report on town and country planning in February 2025, which included 14 recommendations to strengthen national policy and the framework for Welsh language

assessment of plans, policies and applications. The Welsh Government responded to the report in February 2026, accepting additional work may be required pending the establishment of a single statutory assessment methodology covering all areas of decision making, not just planning. No timescales have been provided for this work.

10. In any casework where the report is raised by parties, Inspectors should be aware of the recommendations and Welsh Government response. The report is not a policy document, but a statement by a government-appointed commission which may reinforce certain representations received.

Decision-making

11. There is now a significant amount of legislative and policy support for sustaining and promoting the language generally, but the lack of a consistent policy approach to determining planning impacts may present some hurdles at appeal.

12. The Driver judgment confirms that the Welsh text of an Act has equal status with the English. This has implications to the way LDP policies and other documents are construed. The judgment also confirmed that, to discharge its duty in relation to the Welsh Language, a decision maker must be informed by a meaningful assessment of impact.

13. The use of Welsh Language Impact Assessments (WLIAs) can provide helpful evidence whether produced by the appellant or LPA. Census figures by themselves are unlikely to be determinative. Clear and compelling evidence which demonstrates a detailed understanding of a community, including past patterns of change and occupation of new houses, would normally be a prerequisite for establishing any effects of a proposal on the Welsh language. Whilst it has tended to be housing schemes that give rise to language issues, other types of development, such as employment schemes, may also require WLIAs.

14. Analysis of past appeal decisions suggest that Welsh has rarely been a main issue, but when raised it has usually been in relation to housing proposals where concerns have centred on the impact of prospective occupiers on the linguistic profile of the host community. Most decisions pre-date the latest editions of PPW and TAN20.

15. In a recovered appeal decision (APP/Q6810/A/16/3154011) in 2018 the Cabinet Secretary was not persuaded that the appellant's submitted linguistic assessment proved that the development would not have a detrimental effect on the Welsh language. This was on the basis that most of the site was outside the settlement boundary in the extant development plan, despite having previously been a housing allocation in the plan in force at the time of the assessment. As a result, the impact of a potential for 366 additional units above that planned for and assessed in the development plan had not been properly considered. This was one of several harmful impacts identified in the overall conclusion to dismiss the appeal.

16. The sole main issue in an advertisement appeal decision in 2018 (APP/M6825/H/18/3202863) was the effect of a sign on the Welsh language. It considered planning policy promoting bilingual signs against the limitations set out in

the Control of Advertisement Regulations 1992 which identifies amenity and public safety as the only considerations that may be taken into account in the determination of an application for advertisement consent. Mindful of the duty imposed by the WBFG Act to promote the Welsh language, the appeal was dismissed.

17. The effect on the Welsh language in a small, predominantly Welsh-speaking settlement in a popular holiday area of Gwynedd was one of three main issues in case reference APP/Q6810/A/21/3266774, issued in April 2021. In that case, the absence of a planning obligation to secure affordable housing, a lack of information in relation to local wages and the likely market price of the proposed six dwellings, and the likelihood of future occupants being drawn into the village from places with a lower proportion of Welsh speakers, led to the Inspector being unable to conclude that the effect on the Welsh Language would not be harmful. The appeal was dismissed due in part to conflict with local and PPW policies relating to the Welsh language.

18. In the case CAS-02892-R3Q9P5, issued in May 2024, the effect on the Welsh language was among one of the main issues. The scheme proposed a relatively large-scale affordable housing provision on an 'exceptions' site adjacent to a small village in Anglesey. As the occupation of the dwellings would be effectively controlled to ensure that they would meet local need there was a likelihood that prospective occupants would reflect the linguistic profile of the host community. Other concerns, including over the expertise of the author of the appellant's language impact assessment, were not found to be persuasive and the appeal was allowed.

19. In a decision issued in December 2025 (CAS-04193-Q6T2W9), the effect of an affordable housing scheme on the Welsh language in a Gwynedd village was the only main issue. Council housing register data showed a local need in excess of the scale of development proposed. It was unlikely that all future occupants would be drawn from outside the local community or district, or that none of them would have any Welsh language skills. Given the high proportion of people with Welsh language skills in the community, in the worst-case scenario where none of the occupiers would have such skills and would all come from outside the area, the effects on the Welsh language would not be significant. The appeal was allowed.

Other relevant chapters

- Advertisements